New Brunswick Wellness Strategy

A **Provincial Health Plan** Initiative

New Nouveau Brunswick CANADA

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Executive Summary

The 2004-2008 Provincial Health Plan, *Healthy Futures*: Securing New Brunswick's Health Care System, established four strategic priorities to guide new investments and actions to ensure the sustainability of New Brunswick's health care system today and into the future.

The Government of New Brunswick established as its first priority *Improving Population Health* because it recognizes that healthy living is basic to good health and personal well-being.

Within this strategic priority are measures to promote healthy living, to better manage and control chronic diseases, to reduce the incidence of cancer and to prevent sickness and disease through an expanded immunization program.

One of the measures in *Improving Population Health* is a commitment to develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-year Wellness Strategy for the Province of New Brunswick.

This commitment recognizes that one of the most pressing health challenges that we and all of North America face today is the need to address unhealthy lifestyle habits that affect too many of our citizens.

Too many New Brunswickers are not as healthy as they should be, with obesity, smoking and lack of physical activity all contributing to an unhealthy population.

New Brunswickers would improve their health by eating sensibly, by exercising more and by not smoking.

Adopting these positive lifestyle choices will result in healthier and longer lives for individuals and will have a profoundly positive impact on our health system.

Our vision of New Brunswickers reaching and maintaining their personal health potential in their communities requires investing in promoting healthy lifestyles in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

This document provides details of initial investments that the Government of New Brunswick will undertake as part of its Wellness Strategy to attain this vision.

Strategic Direction: Partnership and Collaboration

Healthy Eating Physical Activity Coalition of New Brunswick

The Healthy Eating Physical Activity Coalition of New Brunswick (HEPAC) is a network of community and government organizations and individuals who share a common vision of creating an environment in New Brunswick that supports healthy eating and physical activity.

The partnerships developed through HEPAC work to strengthen and expand efforts to involve all parties committed to primary prevention and health promotion through a population health approach. A population health approach focuses on factors that enhance the health and well being of the overall population. It is concerned with the living and working environments that affect people's health, the conditions that enable and support people in making healthy choices, and the services that promote and maintain health.

The Government of New Brunswick will contribute $35,000 in 2005-06 to continue to support the work of the Healthy Eating Physical Activity Coalition of New Brunswick.

New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition

The New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition (NBATC) is an organization composed of public and private sector stakeholders who are interested in tobacco control and the implementation of an Anti-Tobacco Strategy in New Brunswick.

The vision of NBATC is a tobacco-free province and it strives to work collaboratively with stakeholders to change attitudes, behaviors and environments towards tobacco products and their use in order to build support for anti-tobacco initiatives.

As a partner to the coalition, the Government of New Brunswick will contribute $35,000 in 2005-06 to support this work.

New Brunswick Advisory Council on Youth

The New Brunswick Advisory Council on Youth is a provincial body representative of youth, which voices the interests, needs, concerns and perspectives of young people aged 15-25, and presents recommendations to government and to the public. This is achieved by acting as an advisory body, through resource coordination, research and consultation. Through its actions, the New Brunswick Advisory Council on Youth strives to be a catalyst for increasing youth involvement in society.

Wellness Strategy funding in 2005-05 will assist the Youth Council in building on its consultation process regarding health issues that impact on youth. It will also assist the Youth Council in promoting youth leadership in the areas of healthy eating, physical activity, mental health and tobacco reduction. The Council will also work to develop increased education and awareness for youth on health related matters.

The Government of New Brunswick will contribute $35,000 in 2005-06 to support this work.

Strategic Direction: Community Development

Link Program / Programme Le Maillon

The Link Program / Programme Le Maillon is designed to give youth from Grades 6 through 12 who are experiencing any kind of problem an opportunity to access help through a resource person. The program's goal is to provide teenagers with the opportunity to find a solution to their difficulties before they lead to more severe ones, as well as helping them acquire new coping skills and build mental resiliency.

Created by the Grand Falls Suicide Prevention Committee in 1999, the program started in schools in the Grand Falls area and has expanded to several schools throughout and outside the Province. It is being developed and used at different levels in different schools, and has evolved outside the school in the Grand Falls area as a community project sponsored by a social club.

The program links youths with participating teachers, other professionals and community resources. Students receive a Link Program card, on the back of which is a sticker that displays toll-free phone numbers that provide access to various resources.

To establish contact with the resource person, the teenager shows his or her card, or puts it in a place where the resource person will find it (in their homework, in the teacher's mailbox, etc.). As soon as the resource person receives the card, he or she makes contact with the youth to set up a time for a meeting.

When the resource person meets with the youth, the problem is analysed and, if necessary, the teenager is referred to a service that will meet his or her needs. The card is given back to the youth.

In 2005-06, $200,000 has been budgeted to further expand the Link Program to schools at the Grades 6 through 12 levels. This will fund one full-time position as well as development of web-based information for youth.

This is a multi-year commitment.

5 – 10 a day – It's the Healthy Way

There is strong and growing evidence that sufficient consumption of vegetables and fruit helps to prevent many diseases and promotes good health.

An adequate daily intake of vegetables and fruits could help prevent chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and certain cancers.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends 5 to 10 servings per day of fruits and vegetables. Currently, we know that New Brunswick children and youth fall short of this recommendation.

To support this objective and to complement the Department of Education's new healthy food and beverages policy in schools, a healthy food grant program will be initiated in middle schools to promote the consumption of vegetables and fruits.

In 2005-06, $400,000 has been budgeted to implement the 5 – 10 a day – It's the Healthy Way initiative. This initiative will also develop community links so that fruits and vegetables are more readily available in recreational community facilities such as rinks and pools. A full-time nutritionist will assist in the implementation and delivery of the grant program as well as other nutrition related initiatives.

This is a multi-year commitment.

Engaging Active Communities

The Active Communities Grant Program will support new or enhanced opportunities for New Brunswickers to engage in physical activity and become better aware of the benefits to be gained from physical activity as part of an active, healthy life.

Developed by the Culture and Sport Secretariat, the program will assist New Brunswick in meeting its goal to increase the physical activity level of New Brunswickers by 10 percentage points by 2010.

This grant program is available to non-profit and community-based groups and organizations, as well as municipalities. Applications are now available from the Culture and Sport Secretariat and must be received by Feb. 9, 2006.

More information about the program can be found at www.gnb.ca (Keyword: Culture and Sport) or by calling the Culture and Sport Secretariat at (506) 453-2928.

In 2005-06, $275,000 will be invested in the Active Communities Grant Program.

This is a multi-year commitment.

Tobacco-Free Schools

The Tobacco Free Schools grant program was introduced in 2002-03 as a three-year project to assist high schools that are actively working to become 100 per cent tobacco free.

Since its inception, the grant program has invested in a wide range of initiatives in high schools to support tobacco reduction, including awareness campaigns, development and purchasing of resources, signage, cessation programs and the creation of active and welcoming outdoor spaces for students as an alternative to smoking areas, which have been eliminated.

In New Brunswick, according to the 2004 Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, 18 per cent of youth aged 15-19 years were current smokers. Although the number has declined in recent years, it is still important to address youth tobacco use in the context of broad comprehensive approaches to promote wellness.

To support this goal, the Tobacco-Free Schools program has been extended by an additional year, 2005-06, with an available investment of $100,000 as part of the Wellness Strategy.

Baby-Friendly™ Initiative

Breast milk provides optimal nutrition needed for a baby's healthy growth and development and boosts the baby's immune system. Breastfed infants have lower risks of being obese, developing allergies, becoming ill with breathing problems and infections, and succumbing to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

As part of its Wellness Strategy, the Government of New Brunswick will promote, support and protect breastfeeding by adopting the evidence-based Baby-Friendly™ Initiative (BFI).

BFI is an international program jointly developed by the World Health Organization and UNICEF to optimize breastfeeding outcomes for mothers and babies by creating a health care environment where breastfeeding is the norm, and improving the quality of care through incorporation of evidence-based practices to promote, protect and support breastfeeding in hospitals and in the community.

All hospitals, Community Health Centres and Public Health services providing services to women, infants, young children and their families will undertake steps towards achieving Baby-Friendly™ Initiative designation.

In 2005-06, $100,000 will be invested in this initiative.

This is a multi-year commitment.

Strategic Direction: Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles

Social Marketing Campaign

To increase awareness of the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle and to help encourage New Brunswickers to assume greater responsibility for their own health, the Government of New Brunswick will launch a multi-media social marketing campaign.

This will include providing information on how New Brunswickers can access opportunities within their communities where they and their families can engage in more healthy and active lifestyles.

In 2005-06, $300,000 will be invested in this initiative.

This is a multi-year commitment.

Learning Opportunities

New Brunswick is fortunate to have many groups and organizations that share Government's vision of seeing New Brunswickers live healthier, happier and longer lives, and who are actively engaged in the promotion of healthy living.

As part of its wellness strategy, the Government of New Brunswick will promote and support learning opportunities for stakeholders to share success stories and to work together to continue to develop initiatives and strategies to improve the wellness of New Brunswickers. This investment of $50,000 will fund wellness conferences and workshops.

Strategic Direction: Research, Evaluation and Surveillance

Wellness Surveillance Program

The wellness of New Brunswick children is generally found to be lower than elsewhere in Canada. To better understand the variation in the wellness of children throughout the province and to assess the impact of the Wellness Strategy, a longitudinal surveillance/evaluation and research initiative will monitor and measure the progress of children and youth in the areas of physical activity and healthy eating.

The surveillance initiative will involve the establishment of baseline measures as well as systematic monitoring over time.

In 2005-06, $400,000 will be invested in this initiative.

This is a multi-year commitment.

Physical Activity Monitoring Initiative

At their annual conference held in Bathurst in 2003, Canada's ministers responsible for physical activity set as a target "to increase physical activity in every province and territory by 10 percentage points by 2010."

To accurately report on progress to achieve this target, a five-year national monitoring program is being implemented to measure the physical activity levels of children age 5-12 and youth 13-19. This will involve the use of pedometers and the collection of data from more than 10,000 children and youth across Canada, including 750 from New Brunswick. This project will be undertaken by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute.

In 2005-06, $25,000 will be invested in this initiative.

This is a multi-year commitment.

NB Nutritious Food Basket

To help families select healthy, affordable food choices, the Government of New Brunswick will develop a New Brunswick Nutritious Food Basket based on Health Canada's recommended Dietary Reference Intakes. The resulting information will be used to assist New Brunswick families in acquiring the most nutrition for their food dollar.

In 2005-06, $25,000 will be invested to complete this initiative.

UNB Paediatric Weight Management Clinic

The University of New Brunswick has initiated a pilot program called Paediatric Weight Management Clinic to address childhood obesity and physical inactivity. The pilot is sponsored by the Facility of Kinesiology and utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach involving dieticians, psychologists, physical education specialists and nurses.

The Centre deals with prevention to intervention and focuses on children age 6-12. The program involves parents as well.

In 2005-06, $20,000 will be invested to support this pilot, which could provide a model to be used around the province.

Strategic Direction: Healthy Public Policy

Since June 1999, the Government of New Brunswick has developed and implemented a number of public policy initiatives and programs that promote wellness and healthy living.

These include:

- **Smoke-free Places Act**, which prohibits smoking on school grounds, in retail stores, community halls, conference centres, sports arenas, bingos, bars, restaurants and all indoor workplaces.
- **Healthier Foods and Nutrition in Public Schools**, a comprehensive nutrition-related policy to provide students with healthy food and beverage choices in schools.
- Succès NB Success, an online tool to help individuals and groups increase physical activity and literacy.
- School Communities in ACTION, a program designed to assist schools in adopting, implementing and maintaining a variety of physical activity opportunities.
- GO NB!, a grant program that provides funding to support partnerships among sport and recreation organizations, schools and communities.
- Healthy Minds, a grant program for Kindergarten to Grade 3 schools to ensure hunger is not a barrier to learning.
- Healthy Learners in School Program, **a program in which Public Health nurses work with schools and parents** to develop and support health promotion efforts that involve all areas of health — physical, emotional and social – and support healthy decision-making and behaviours that will last into adulthood.

As part of the Wellness Strategy, the Government of New Brunswick will continue to pursue related public policies including, but not limited to:

- Research best models and practices for the development of a corporate strategic plan for employee workplace wellness for government employees and other interested parties.
- Challenge New Brunswick employers to develop workplace wellness programs.
- Mandate the Deputy Ministers' Wellness Strategy Committee to monitor the implementation of the Wellness Strategy Action Plan and report progress. The committee will also promote and coordinate government wellness actions, facilitate the development of healthy public policy on an ongoing basis, and update the Wellness Strategy Action Plan every four years.